DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 432 EA 030 340

TITLE	The Building Leadership Team. The SILC Road.
INSTITUTION	Colorado State Dept. of Education, Denver.; Colorado Univ., Denver. Center for Collaborative Educational Leadership.; PEAK Parent Center, Inc., Colorado Springs, CO.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	21p.; SILC stands for Supporting Inclusive Learning Communities.
CONTRACT	H086J50003
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Change; Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Leadership; *Leaders Guides; Leadership Training; Team Training
IDENTIFIERS	*Comprehensive School Improvement Program

ABSTRACT

This booklet was designed to help families, school professionals, and students understand the function and purpose of comprehensive school improvement. It is part of the SILC Road initiative, which was founded by several education groups in Colorado for the purpose of helping schools educate all students. The volume focuses on the elements of the Building Leadership Team (BLT) process. It contains ideas and suggestions across a broad range of topics, from gathering and using information to working on specific change strategies. For established teams, the guide may serve as a tool for critiquing current processes. Recently established teams will find helpful information to guide the organization and development of their work. The text describes the function of BLTs and their role in the school community. It suggests who should be a member of a BLT, each member's duties, the purpose of BLTs, and what members can expect. The volume discusses ways to make meetings productive, such as setting an agenda, establishing norms, encouraging productive dialogue, and handling the minutes. Tips are offered on collaborative decision making, reaching consensus, honoring dissent, voting, creating a plan for the first 6 months of work, staying on track, and remembering constituencies. A list of 15 additional readings is provided. (RJM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

EA

the building leadership team

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

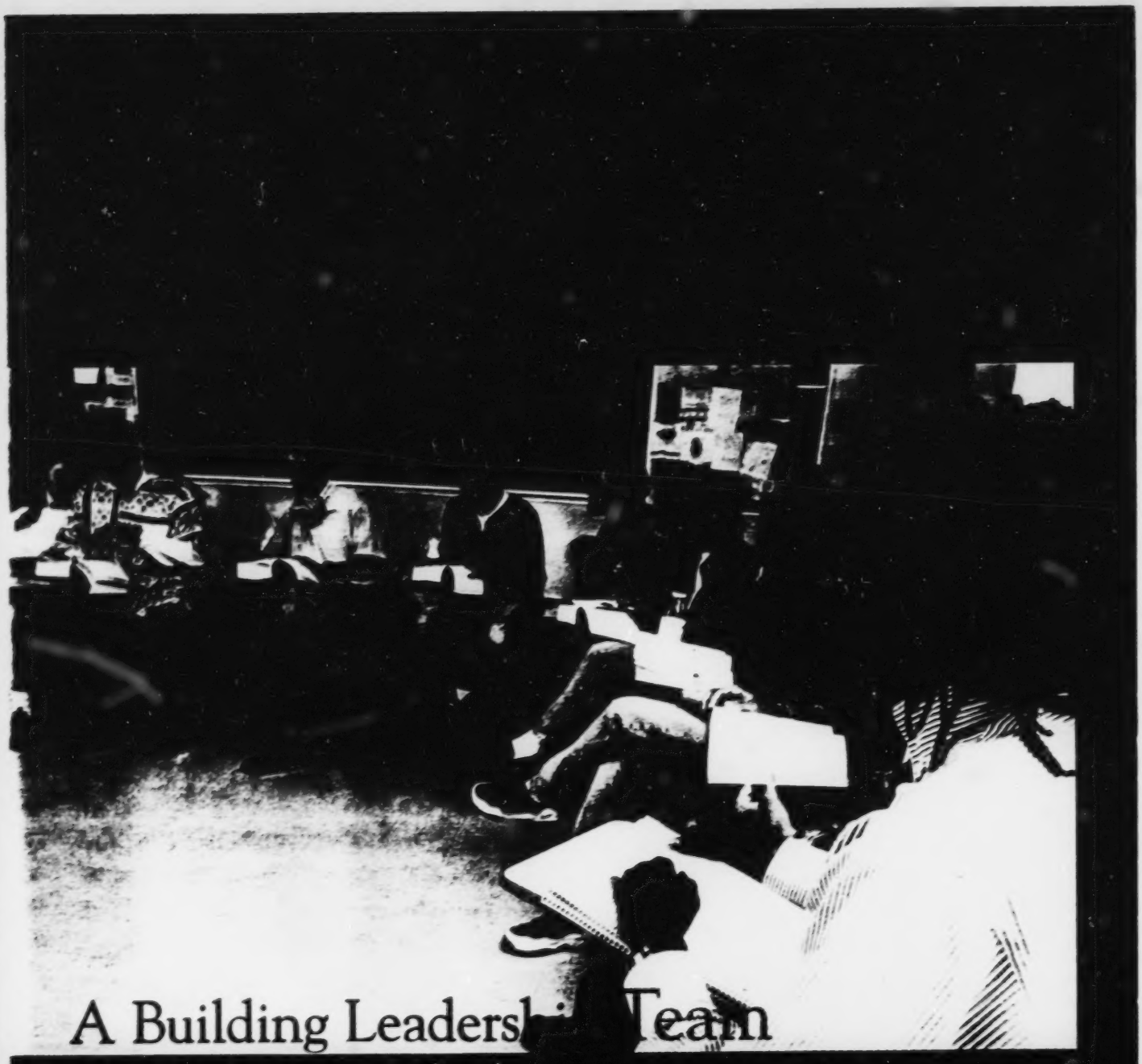
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

THE SILC ROAD

ED 440 432

EA 030 340



A Building Leadership Team orchestrates the work of families, school professionals, administrators and students.

using *this guide*

The SILC Road is a collaborative initiative of the Colorado Department of Education, the Center for Collaborative Educational Leadership at the University of Colorado at Denver and PEAK Parent Center, Colorado's Parent Training and Information Center. Designed to help schools and their communities renew their efforts to educate ALL students, the initiative is funded in part from the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education. This booklet is one in a series designed to help families, school professionals and students understand the function and purpose of comprehensive school improvement.

The Silk Road was an ancient trade route that served as a bridge to transport political, social, cultural and linguistic traditions from one culture to another, creating rich, pluralistic milieus that enriched and nurtured learning and innovation. The SILC Road continues the tradition of the Silk Road. In our journey toward Supporting Inclusive Learning Communities, SILC Road schools use a variety of whole school change strategies to ensure that curriculum and instruction are designed to include traditionally marginalized students.

This guide focuses on the elements of the Building Leadership Team process. You'll find ideas and suggestions across a broad range of topics, from gathering and using information to working on specific change strategies.

For established teams, the guide may serve as a tool for critiquing your current processes. Teams that have only recently been established will find helpful information and ideas to guide the organization and development of their work. We hope that you will find this guide, like our others, practical and useful.

Robin Brewer
Terri Connolly
Janet Filbin
Elizabeth Kozleski
Beth Schaffner

The use of team leadership helps to facilitate rapid and sustained change.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

sharing leadership

What is a Building Leadership Team?

A Building Leadership Team (BLT) is a school-based group of individuals who work to provide a strong organizational process for school renewal and improvement. BLTs orchestrate the work of school professionals, administrators, families, and students through the school improvement process. This process includes the examination of current, successful practices and also those areas that are of concern to the school community. In addition, BLTs plan for progress, achievement, and risk.

Team leadership helps to facilitate rapid and sustained change. Often, circumstances such as high turnover, classroom isolation, and limited executive authority make it difficult for schools to make the decisions needed for improvement.

Leadership teams, then, can provide a context for decision making. The use of BLTs emphasizes the need for clear sanction and participation from other school staff, reasonable delegation of responsibility and authority from the district office and board, and resources for the team's work.

The BLT meets regularly throughout the school year to ensure that both planning for school improvement and the implementation of those plans is on course. When necessary, the BLT works to develop or change building policies so that policies, procedures, and activities work together to support the work of educators and students. BLTs are responsible for collecting data in order to identify topics and processes for professional development. They help keep the focus on a few specific targets and work with the building principal to assure that administrative structures support the instructional program.

Do BLTs replace principals?

Principals are like conductors. They can't make music without their musicians but they lead the process of performing. Principals are responsible to the central administration and ultimately to the School Board to ensure that the policies and processes established for the district as a whole are implemented in their buildings. They must assure that the safety and security of students and staff alike are maintained. Principals are accountable for the overall academic achievement of all learners in their building. Evaluation and mentoring of school professionals in the building is a vital and

time-consuming part of each principal's role. Because of these responsibilities, the principal plays a critical role in shaping the agendas for each building leadership team.

What's the commitment?

BLT members are committing themselves to the equivalent of about an hour and a half per week of meeting time. Meetings may occur weekly, every other week, or when a team is well-established, monthly. BLT members are also committing themselves to complete work between meetings. In addition, the BLT should have at least one retreat at the beginning of each year to establish a working plan. Teams may also choose to meet at the end of the year to assess and complete an annual review of progress. BLT members will have the opportunity to network with other school BLTs via electronic mail and face-to-face at conferences and meetings.

building *the team*

Who should be a member?

Membership on the team should be diverse. You'll want to consider students, practitioners, family and community members, and administrative staff. Because a leadership team must be sustainable over time, consider staggering the terms for members, thus ensuring a smoother transition for new members and less disruption to the team's work. Ensure that as many people as possible engage in the process of selecting members for the team.

Decide on a process for how members are selected or nominated for the team. These questions should be considered:

- At the elementary level, is each grade level represented?
- How are specials included?
- At the secondary level, should members represent teams? Content area? Grade level?
- Do parents represent the diversity present in the school community (i.e., second language learners)?
- Will students directly participate or will there be a process to include their voices in decision making?

Who does what?

Part of "building the team" is sharing the responsibilities that accompany the running of any meeting. The following are process roles that the team might find helpful to the overall efficiency of a meeting (these jobs are often rotated):

- Facilitator: Guides the meeting process and remains objective.
- Timekeeper: Keeps track of how much time has been spent on an issue. Advises group when time allotted for an agenda item is up. Helps to ensure equitable floor time for speakers.
- Scribe: Takes notes.
- Doorkeeper: Sits near the door and fills in latecomers with the current status of the meeting and what has been discussed so far.
- Temperature taker: Monitors how the group is responding to each other.

What is the purpose of a BLT?

Part of building the team is helping people focus on outcomes. Revisiting these purposes and outcomes periodically provides the opportunity to reassess team processes. Each team establishes its purpose. Some possibilities are listed below:

- Provides leadership for setting school targets and accomplishments and presents evidence to central administration of the plan for school improvement each year.
- Organizes workgroups that will accomplish tasks related to school improvement.

- Insures that the building engages in a variety of evaluation tasks—those that help determine the goals, those that help to inform progress and change, and those that benchmark success (i.e., student achievement, school climate, etc.).
- Based on data, determines the areas of need and provides leadership for professional development within the building, takes leadership for ensuring that the entire building (staff, parents, community members, and students) become a learning community.
- Understands and works within the policies and guidelines of the district.

What can members expect?

As a team member, you can expect to:

- Own solutions and not just problems.
- Challenge the way things are.
- Reach out to unexpected constituencies.
- Be willing to learn, change, take another's perspective.
- See your role and the role of your team as a part of a larger ecosystem.
- Understand that change will bring unexpected side effects—try to anticipate the ripple effects of change.
- Understand the system that you work in.
- Understand the strengths that you and your team members bring to the work.
- Assume a role of collaborative leadership.
- Avoid negativity—this is not an event but a new way of working with others.
- Empower yourself.

making *meetings productive*

Why set an agenda?

Remember that people have limited amounts of time. At the beginning of the meeting, set time limits for each item. It will be important for BLTs to have time to make decisions as well as dialogue. Some members of your team will disengage unless the team accomplishes its agenda. Remember to create agendas together. Make sure that everyone gets an opportunity to place items on the agenda and that these items are legitimized through discussion and action. Rotate the responsibility for convening meetings and the role each member plays at the meeting. Post the agenda at least a day before the meeting as a reminder to your team members. Label items on the agenda as informational, discussion, and/or action. Ensure that the principal has a time slot on the agenda for announcements. A sample agenda can be found in the appendix.

What are the norms?

People who work together need to be explicit about a set of norms for their work, since people have differing sets of expectations and skills for meetings. Not everyone feels comfortable in these formalized structures, so new groups often lean towards informality to ease the comfort level of the participants. As a result, meetings may not be as productive as they need to be to sustain the group over time. It is important to have a conversation among your team members early on to establish a way of working together. Some norms might include using written and verbal input, keeping minutes, sharing the limited time to talk by creating time limits for contributions, being on time, and having a process to inform team members who must miss a meeting. Another item to discuss might be how to offer solutions rather than critique the worth of others' contributions.

How should a meeting be facilitated?

Adhering to formalized meeting procedures builds a strong, productive team. Teams will need to decide on several factors, one of which is designating a facilitator or chairperson. This position can be delegated to one person, shared by two team members, or shared among the group. The responsibilities of a facilitator might include the following: guiding the team through the agenda, keeping the agenda rolling, recognizing obstacles and assisting the team in working through them, relaying information back to the team, and assisting with the decision-making process. Finally, be sure to end your meetings on time!

How do we encourage productive dialogue?

Productive dialogue is essential to effective team meetings. Some ideas include using round robins (asking each individual to offer up to a two-minute opinion on the subject) to tie up discussions. You can also ask people to write down their top three ideas on a topic so that no one's ideas are lost. In a group of 10 or more people, you might ask pairs to dialogue about an issue for two minutes and share their merged ideas with the group. Make sure that the questions that elicit discussion require more than yes/no answers. For instance, "To what extent are our students feeling supported by the faculty?" rather than "Are our students feeling supported by the faculty?" Ask the team to reflect on what they are learning. Periodically, take the time to summarize a conversation.

How do we accomplish the work?

Take the time in your retreats to plan ahead, assigning specific tasks and timelines. The group can arrive at consensus on these activities. Then, your frequent meetings can provide an opportunity for status reports (information items) and decision making based on the work of small workgroups. Build your calendar of activities on at least a semester-by-semester basis. Make sure that the roles and responsibilities of each group member are spelled out (facilitator, decision taker, convener, etc). Ask for status reports by activity at each of your meetings. Make sure that the tasks that you work on have buy-in from your whole group. Document your decisions so that team members have access to them. An Activity Planner is included in the appendix. This document is designed to help keep targets in focus.

How do we handle the minutes?

Minutes are important artifacts that help the team keep track of decisions, discussions, and topics. They should be kept for each meeting and reviewed at subsequent meetings.

Post the decisions of your last meeting in a conspicuous place, such as right in front of your building's copy machine(s). Post when and where the next meeting will occur. Remind faculty about your meeting at least two days before it is held.

Use print and e-mail to keep your faculty and staff informed. Make sure that BLT members have a venue to share information from the BLT meeting. This could be in the form of a grade-level team meeting, where meeting minutes could help remind people of the work done.

decision-making processes

How do we assure collaborative decision-making?

Decisions made by Building Leadership Teams should represent the collective judgment of the school community. Each member of the BLT has a responsibility to act as the voice for the group of stakeholders they may represent. Collaborative decision making allows for each team member to state their views. Consensus is reached after thoroughly discussing the problem or issue and represents the best decision of the group as a whole. The results of this process are that members must agree to live with the decision of the group and commit to carrying out the decision or solution.

How can we reach consensus?

A consensus decision is either unanimous or a majority decision that the entire team, including dissenters, will agree upon and work to implement.

Steps to assist the team with reaching consensus include:

- Define and clarify problem or topic
- Determine who will be impacted by the decision
- Gather information, including feedback from those who will be affected
- Discuss problem or topic, generating alternative solutions
- Discuss differences and agreements
- Make the decision
- Determine an evaluation process
- Implement the decision

Typically, BLT members will find that they have little difficulty reaching consensus when all of the decision making steps are followed. There may be occasions, however, when conflict arises during the process.

How do we honor dissent?

Periodically, teams may experience times when a decision cannot be reached and resolution is delayed. If the team is unable to reach consensus on an issue after a period of time, several options or concessions may be considered by teams.

These include:

- use a neutral, third party to facilitate through the impasse record
- post dissenting viewpoints in the minutes
- determine a probationary term to test implementation of the decision

When is voting appropriate?

Most people are familiar with the use of the democratic method of decision making. Voting can set up teams to take sides. The result may be resistance to implementing decisions that a few individuals do not agree with. There are times, however, when voting can expedite consensus decision making. Early in the stages of problem solving, voting may be used to narrow choices. These decisions are made according to the vote of the majority of a pre-determined percentage of BLT members.

What is an example of decision making?

Initial school profile information collected by Crest Middle School indicates that over the past three years, there has been a significant increase in student tardiness. Two workgroups from the Building Leadership Team have been involved in collecting in-depth information from students, teachers, administrators, and parents about the issue of tardiness and compiling the latest research on best practices and effectiveness of interventions. The data collection workgroup found that teachers give consequences for tardiness in different ways. Student information suggested that several classroom clocks were off by a few minutes, which was problematic when moving from class to class. The research practices workgroup shared several strategies, including hall monitors, cueing students with a short bell when there are only two minutes left for hall passing, and a "hall sweep."

After discussing the possible reasons behind the increasing tardiness, BLT members discussed the pros and cons of each strategy researched, compiled and shared by the workgroup. The team came to consensus on three decisions:

1) a tardy policy needed to be developed for all teachers to follow;
2) this policy would be reviewed by students and parents for input; and
3) a two-minute warning bell would be sounded toward the end of the each passing period. The BLT set up a timeline of one quarter to determine if implementation of these strategies worked or would need revising.

working *important topics*

How do we create a plan for the first six months of work?

In order to maintain the focus for the team's work, it is important to create a plan that lays out the BLT's work in six-month increments. This helps to ensure a number of things:

- Timely planning for upcoming projects/data collection, etc.
- Delegation of responsibility to a broad selection of team members
- Efficient use of team members' time
- A structure from which to maintain the team's focus.
- The Path Process has been used with schools to plan for systemic change. This planning is included in the appendix.

How to keep on track?

Several ways to help keep people on track are:

- Honor individuals for any good deed, action, or contribution. Pay attention to each team member's work.
- Keep the focus of the meeting on agenda items by adhering to the norms set by the group.
- Honor people's commitment by beginning and ending meetings on time.
- Revisit the goals and outcomes regularly.
- Watch for unexpressed issues and feelings.
- Look for who is speaking and who is not.
- Ask for contributions from silent members.

How to commit to homework?

Depending on how often the BLT meets, it is likely that some work will need to be done outside of meeting times. This might include data collection, data analysis, reports, readings, etc. BLT members need to ensure that homework or additional duties do not encumber members, while at the same time acknowledging that time outside the regular school day may be required of the team.

How to remember your constituencies?

Keeping the school staff and community informed about the decisions and activities of the BLT are critical to maintaining and enhancing its leadership role. To that extent, it is important to develop a feedback loop that keeps constituencies informed.

The following questions may help focus how your team accomplishes this:

- What process will team members use to communicate BLT decisions to the rest of the faculty?
- How will input be sought from others, including school personnel and community members?
- To what degree will there be student involvement?

additional readings

Atwater, D., & Bass, B.M. (1994). Transformational leadership in teams. In B.M. Bass & B. Avolio (Eds.) *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Bass, B., & Avolio, B. (1994). Introduction in B. Bass & Bruce Avolio (Eds). *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Fullan, M. (1998). *What's worth fighting for in the principalship*. Andover, MA: The Network.

Fullan, M. (1992). *Successful school improvement*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change Forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. Bristol, PA: Falmer.

Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1991). *What's worth fighting for? Working together for your school*. Toronto, Ontario: Ontario Public School Teachers.

Katzenbach, J.R., & Smith, D.K. (1993). *The wisdom of teams: Creating the high performance organization*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Kruse, S., Louis, K.S., & Bryk, A. (1994). *Building professional community in schools, Issues in restructuring*. Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison-WI.

Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Louis, K. B., & Miles, M. B. (1990). *Mustering the will and skill for change. Educational Leadership*, 57-61.

Maeroff, G. I. (1993). *Team building for school change: Equipping teachers for new roles*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

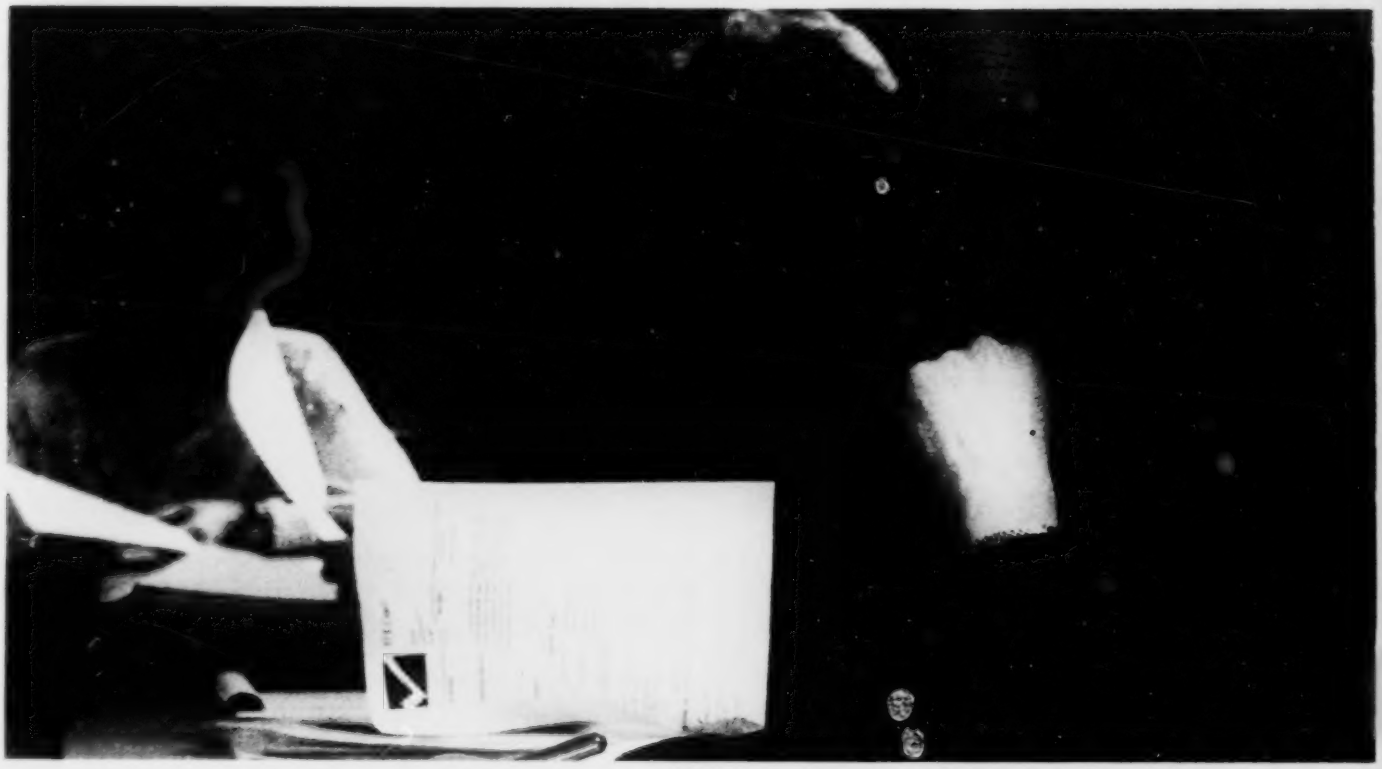
McEwan, E.K. (1997). *Leading your team to excellence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Pearpoint, J., O'Brien, J. & Forest, M. (1993). *Path: Planning alternative tomorrow with hope*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Inclusion Press.

Waterman, R. H. Jr. (1987). *The renewal factor*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Zevin, D. (1998). *California School Leadership Academy review*. Hayward, CA: Alameda County Office of Education.

Appendices



activity planner

path process

sample agenda

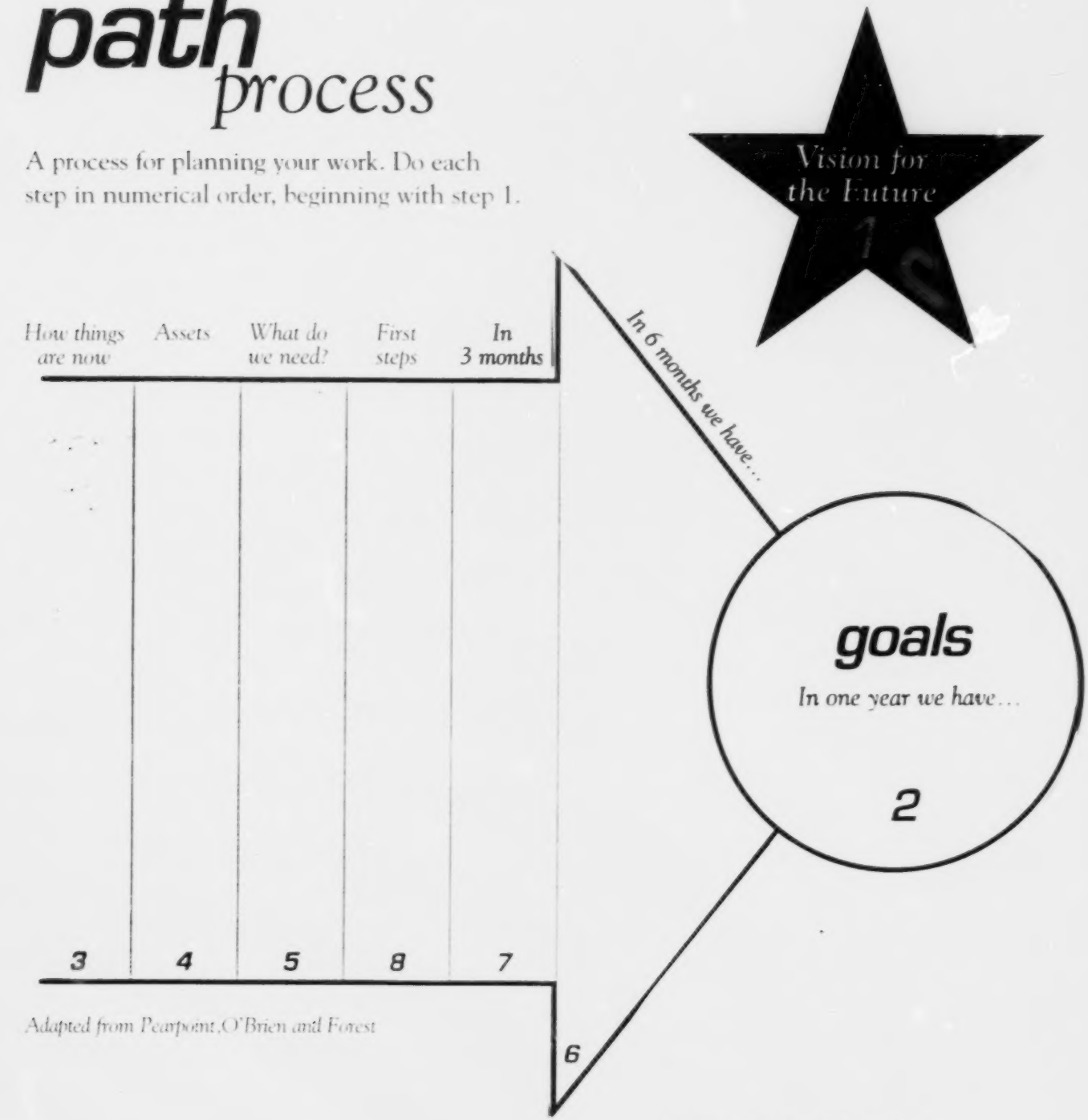
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

activity planner

	Monthly BLT Activities	BLT Targets
1 January		
2 February		
3 March		
4 April		
5 May		

path process

A process for planning your work. Do each step in numerical order, beginning with step 1.



Adapted from Pearpoint, O'Brien and Forest

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

sample agenda

school name:

meeting date:

participants:

meeting roles: (facilitator • decison maker • timekeeper • etc.)

1. *Opening activity*
2. *Review minutes from last meeting*
3. *Set time limits for items*
4. *Agenda items*
5. *Review task assignments*
6. *Next meeting date and agenda*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dr. William J. Moloney	Commissioner of Education
Dr. Arthur J. Ellis	Assistant Commissioner
Ms. Lorrie Harkness	Director of Special Education

Colorado State Board of Education

Clair Orr, Chairman
Fourth Congressional District
Kersey

Pat M. Chlouber, Vice Chairman
Third Congressional District
Leadville

Ben L. Alexander
Member-at-Large
Montrose

John Burnett
Fifth Congressional District
Colorado Springs

Randy DeHoff
Sixth Congressional District
Littleton

Patti Johnson
Second Congressional District
Broomfield

Gully Stanford
First Congressional District
Denver

Project Personnel

Terri Connolly, Project Co-Director
Elizabeth Kozleski, Project Co-Director
Janet Filbin, CDE Project Coordinator
Robin Brewer
Beth Schaffner

For More Information

303-866-6694
jfilbin@ceo.cudenver.edu

Funded in part by the Office of Special Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Award #H086J50003

A SILC ROAD PUBLICATION

The Colorado Department of Education
Special Services Unit
201 E. Colfax Ave • Denver, CO 80203

PEAK Parent Center
6055 Lehman Drive, Suite 101 • Colorado Springs, CO 80918

University of Colorado at Denver

Center for Collaborative Educational Leadership
Resources for Inclusionary Practices
1380 Lawrence Street, Suite 650
Denver, CO 80202